



Epoetin alfa

(*Procrit*[®])

What is Epoetin alfa?

Chemotherapy works by killing cancer cells; unfortunately, it can't tell the difference between a cancer cell and a healthy cell. Among the healthy cells chemotherapy can destroy are red blood cells. Red blood cells carry oxygen throughout the entire body, which helps maintain your energy. And while there may be many reasons why patients with cancer feel weak, as a chemotherapy patient you may find yourself with a low red blood cell count. Epoetin alfa is a drug that is used to increase red blood cells. Specifically, Epoetin alfa works by stimulating your bone marrow to produce more red blood cells. With more red blood cells in your body, you may have more energy.

How will I receive Epoetin alfa?

Epoetin alfa is a clear liquid that is injected just under the skin (subcutaneously) or into a vein (intravenously).

What are the common side effects?

Please see chapter 5, “Managing Symptoms at Home,” in the manual.

What You May Expect	What You Should Do
Pain, swelling, or tenderness may occur where the needle was placed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apply warm compresses or soak in warm water for 15 to 20 minutes several times a day.

Allergic reactions may occur. Signs of an allergic reaction are flushing, rash, itching, dizziness, swelling, or breathing problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stop taking Epoetin alfa and call your cancer doctor, nurse or emergency personnel immediately if you have any sign of allergic reaction (rash, difficulty breathing).
Headaches may occur.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Talk to your doctor or nurse regarding medications you can take to treat your headache.

These are the most common side effects. Others may occur. Please report any problems to your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse.

Seek Help Immediately If You Have:

- Chest pain
- Seizures
- Trouble breathing
- Irregular heartbeat

Contact Your Nurse or Doctor If You Have:

- Redness, swelling, pain, or sores where the needle was placed
- Skin rash or itching
- Breathing problems such as wheezing
- High blood pressure
- Muscle aches or pains
- Rapid weight gain
- Swelling of feet or ankles

Special Instructions

Inform your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse if you are pregnant or breastfeeding as Epoetin alfa may be harmful to your fetus or baby. Use contraception when receiving Epoetin.

You may need to eat foods that contain iron, such as eggs, certain cereals, meats, and vegetables, or you may take an iron supplement while you are using this medicine. Ask your doctor.

Questions?

Call _____

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC Clinic staff are also available to help at any time.

If you are administering Epoetin alfa at home:

- Epoetin alfa needs to be stored in the refrigerator. DO NOT FREEZE.
- DO NOT SHAKE the vial.
- Before injection you may allow the vial to reach room temperature; but any vial left at room temperature for more than 24 hours should be discarded.
- Do not use a vial if the contents look cloudy or discolored, or if it contains lumps, flakes, or particles.
- Discuss with your nurse or pharmacist about how to administer the medication.

Drug-Drug Interactions

Check with your doctor or pharmacist before you start taking any new drugs.

Drug-Food Interactions

None known at this time.

For more complete information, please request an additional teaching sheet from the National Library of Medicine at www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginformation.html, your nurse, pharmacist, or visit the Resource Center.

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A member of the Seattle Cancer Care Alliance, a collaboration of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, the University of Washington and Children's Hospital and Regional Medical Center